

# Alki Pacific Planning

*Access + Mobility + Parking + TDM*

**Date:** 3/1/2018  
**To:** Seattle City Councilmember Rob Johnson (District 4)  
**From:** Kevin Shively, Principal, Alki Pacific Planning LLC  
**Re:** CB 119173 - Off-Street Parking Flexibility/Availability: Summary of Recommendations

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## Overview

In November 2017, the Mayor transmitted to Seattle City Council CB 119173, which is intended to expand the flexibility and availability of off-street parking in Seattle neighborhoods. Among other minor policy changes, CB 119173:

1. **Promotes efficient shared use of off-street parking**, including existing, but underutilized lots and garages,
2. **Maintains greater flexibility for off-street parking supply** in transit accessible areas, and aligns the definition of the frequent transit network with KC Metro scheduling practices, service patterns, and performance standards,
4. **Requires the separation of parking from the lease** of commercial space or residential space, to make pricing transparent and provide lower cost housing choices,
5. **Adjusts bicycle parking requirements** to align with professional best practices,
6. **Updates SEPA policies** related to parking and access, and
7. **Aligns Northgate parking regulations with those of other Urban Centers.**

CB 119173 and potential amendments were summarized and evaluated in two recent memos by Seattle City Council Central Staff in January 16 and February 1, 2018. The Seattle City Council Planning, Land Use and Zoning (PLUZ) Committee discussed the proposed reforms on January 17, and February 7, 2018, and a Public Hearing on CB 119173 was held on February 21, 2018.

## Purpose

To inform deliberation on this important legislation, including consideration of potential amendments and complementary actions by the City, PLUZ Committee Chair Johnson requested consultant support to:

- review off-street parking legislation (CB119173) and supporting materials prepared by SDCI
- research national best practices for addressing project goals and issues identified through Council, staff, and public deliberation to date, and
- identify opportunities to amend the legislation, or to take other actions to address legislative goals.

## Policy Goals for Reform (CB 119173)

The policy goals of CB 119173 are summarized in the SDCI Director's 2017 *Report and Recommendation for Neighborhood Parking Reform*. To support identification of potential amendments and implementation actions, the broad policy goals of reforming the City's existing approach to off-street parking supply regulation are listed and re-framed, as follows. CB 119173 on Off-Street Parking Flexibility and Availability is intended to:

- Provide access to new development,

- Maintain and improve access to nearby properties (within same neighborhood/urban village),
- Maintain availability of curb/ street parking in the area for use by residents, businesses, shoppers and visitors
- Improve the urban form and resulting vibrancy
- Remove hidden incentives to drive (free and below-market rate parking pricing), thereby reducing pollution
- Improve housing affordability by reducing project development costs and increasing the number of units that can be supplied on a given parcel under current zoning limits.

## Key Assumptions and Planning Principles

Evaluation of the proposed legislation (CB 119173), and recommendations in this memo reflect an understanding of the interaction of land use policies and transportation facilities and services, including principles of access and parking management, as follows:

- The broad **goal of transportation and parking** policies and programs is to **improve access for people and goods**
- **Means of access** include both **mobility** strategies, and **proximity** strategies (e.g. locating people, goods, services, and other destinations closer together).
- The **primary function of parking spaces is to provide access** to nearby places for people, and commerce, and/or a place for short, or long-term vehicle storage.
- **The City is primarily responsible for regulation and management of the use of curbside parking** areas,
- In many cities, **land use code requirements** for the provision of a minimum number of off-street parking spaces accessory to specific land uses and activities **were established with the goal of keeping on-street parking available**; or more broadly to maintain curbside access to nearby homes and businesses.
- However, minimum off-street **parking requirements are an indirect means of protecting on-street parking availability** for and access to other properties in the surrounding neighborhood
- **This indirect policy tool has very real impacts.** Required parking:
  - Lowers and/or hides the cost of parking from end users,<sup>1</sup>
  - Raises the price of goods, services, and housing,<sup>2</sup>
  - Subsidizes the cost of owning and operating motor vehicles,<sup>3</sup>
  - Increases driving (VMT),<sup>4</sup>
  - Makes transit service less efficient,<sup>5</sup>
  - Reduces land available for urban housing and commercial development,<sup>6</sup>
  - Encourages sprawling development patterns,<sup>7</sup>
- Even with ample off-street parking, **curbside parking can become congested if it is not managed properly.**
- Regulation and **management of parking on-street parking is a direct and efficient means of improving public parking availability** (It is also within the authority of the City).
- Because **oversupply of parking can generate traffic, it is sensible for the City to permit market-based right sizing of off-street parking supply** within walking distance of frequent transit corridors. This can help mitigate traffic associated with new development, and thus maintain transit speed and reliability in such corridors.

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<sup>1</sup> Shoup, Donald (2005). *The High Cost of Free Parking*. Chicago: APA Planners' Press.

<sup>2</sup> Jason Henderson (2009), "The Spaces of Parking: Mapping the Politics of Mobility in San Francisco," *Antipode* 41, No. 1 (2009): 77; Litman, Todd (2009), "Parking Requirement Impacts on Housing Affordability," Victoria Transport Policy Institute (January 2009); Shoup, D (2005).

<sup>3</sup> Weinberger, Rachel, M. Seaman and C. Johnson (2009), "Residential Off-Street Parking: Car Ownership, Vehicle Miles Traveled, and Related Carbon Emissions (New York City Case Study)," *Transportation Research Record*, no. 2118 (2009): 25.

<sup>4</sup> Richard Willson, "Suburban Parking Requirements: A Tacit Policy for Automobile Use and Sprawl," *Journal of the American Planning Association* 61, no. 1 (1995): 34; Litman (January 2009), 11; Weinberger, Seaman, and Johnson (2009), 2

<sup>5</sup> Henderson (2009), 77.

<sup>6</sup> Litman (January 2009), 9-10; Shoup (1997), 11.

<sup>7</sup> Litman (January 2009), 10-11.; Willson (1995), 36-37

## Summary: Issues and Recommendations

This section summarizes key considerations, best practices, and recommended amendments and next steps for each of several topics and issues addressed in the legislation, or highlighted in public comment or Council deliberation to date.

1. **Flexible Use Parking:** CB 119173 proposes to expand availability of off-street parking in selected areas by replacing “Principal Use” parking with “Flexible Use” (see 23.84A.038) parking, and making it legal to share, sell, lease, or otherwise enable public access to such non-required off-street parking. Council should amend CB 119173 to:
  - A. **Allow short-term or long-term flexible public use of required / accessory parking** (amending 23.54.027) if a parking demand study confirms that such parking is regularly underutilized.
  - B. **Provide direction for SDCI to develop specific design standards** for the placement and function of walkways, signage, and other wayfinding through adoption of a Director’s rule, and/or publication of design guidance by the end of June 2019.
  - C. **Exclude single-purpose flexible use parking in multifamily districts**, downtown Harborfront 2 district, in SODO (square footage of flexible use parking may not exceed leasable floor area). Limit any flexible-use parking in the Harborfront 2 district to ‘short-term’ only.
2. **Parking in Transit Accessible Areas:** Current code defines areas with access to frequent transit service (in addition to Urban Centers and Villages) as eligible for flexibility in off-street parking supply. This memo recommends that Council:
  - a. **Define “frequent transit” as service with a scheduled average of at least four trips per hour** (~ 15-minute frequency) 6AM-7PM on weekdays, and at least two trips per hour (~30-minute frequency) on weekends, and from 7PM to 12AM on weeknights (The SDOT and SDCI alternative).
  - b. **Direct SDCI to develop on an annual basis, by director’s rule, a map defining “frequent transit service areas,”** including all property within one-quarter mile of frequent bus and streetcar stops and one-half mile of “high capacity transit” stations (Existing and funded Link Light Rail stations [PSRC def. of HCT]).
  - c. **Alternative: Allow parking supply flexibility in areas with planned and funded transit service**, assessing development project applications in relation to the transit service likely accessible in 2-4 years, upon project completion (and for the life of the building).
3. **Parking for Affordable Housing:** CB 119173 maintains off-street parking requirements of one parking space for every three to six residential units in below-market rate affordable housing projects. Council should:
  - a. **Exempt income restricted housing from off-street parking requirements citywide**, in light of the lower parking demand, higher transit ridership, and lower VMT rates of low-income households.
4. **Carshare Parking:** CB 119173 provides special exceptions to urban design rules of the zoning code and allows substitution of carshare parking for required accessory parking. Council should amend CB119173 to:
  - a. **Eliminate urban design exceptions** allowing surface carshare parking in certain zones, and permitting additional curb cuts. These exceptions are less necessary to support carsharing, which is dominated by free-floating vehicles (e.g. ReachNow and Car2Go vehicles) utilizing curbside parking.

- b. **Reduce required accessory parking by three spaces for every one carshare parking space provided.**
5. **Unbundled Parking:** CB 119173 requires the separation of parking costs in lease agreements for commercial (10,000 sf or more), and residential space (in buildings with 10+ units). Council should:
- a. **Consider an amendment specifying a method or methods for pricing unbundled parking, and/or a minimum charge (e.g. Bellevue’s requirement that parking cost no less than a monthly transit pass).**
  - b. **Require regular submission to SDCI of documentation of compliance with unbundling requirement.**
6. **Transit Parking:** CB 119173 would permit shared-use park and ride lots, as well as new single-use park and ride lots/garages in selected areas outside of Station Area Overlay Districts. To access, Council should consider:
- a. **Permit park and ride facilities within existing (as of Jan. 1, 2018) parking lots, garages, and structures outside of the Station Area Overlay District (SAOD), including within multifamily districts.**
  - b. **Alternatives** for accommodating transit parking, include:
    - i. **Allowing agency sponsored park and ride facilities in SAOD with restrictions** applicable to flexible-use parking (e.g. parking area may not exceed leasable floor area on site).
    - ii. **Required pricing: Authorizing shared park and ride facilities in certain areas,** on the condition that users be charged hourly or daily parking use fees at prevailing market rates
    - iii. **Excluding development of new park and ride facilities, but authorize third party marketing and use of flexible-use parking within transit corridors and the SAOD.**
7. **Bike Parking Requirements and Guidance:** CB 119173 adopts new bike parking design and quantity standards that better align with national best practice, but would be strengthened by adopting amendments to:
- a. **Direct SDOT and SDCI to develop bike parking location, design, and operating standards** in collaboration with stakeholders (developers, architects, and bicyclists). This should include specific standards for short-term and long-term bicycle parking (including minimum space requirements), end of trip facilities (showers, lockers, changing rooms, etc.), and valet/attended bike parking.
  - b. **Refine bike parking requirements for transit stations** by specifying that bike parking shall be provided at all transit stations and terminals throughout the City, in sufficient quantity to meet the 7% bicycle access mode share target within each corridor. Location, design, and operations standards set by SDOT Directors’ rule, and allocation of total corridor-wide bike parking capacity completed by transit agencies (KCM and ST) with City input by June 2019.
8. **Off-street Parking Limits:** CB 119173 would eliminate selected exceptions to parking maximums downtown and establish a new limit of flexible use parking spaces per block. With better options for “flexible use” of existing, but underutilized off-street parking, Council should take steps to develop locally appropriate limits on new parking supply in neighborhoods/districts across the City. Recommended amendments and next steps include:
- a. **Amend CB 119173 to establish interim maximum off-street parking ratios** for residential (~1.25 space/unit) and non-residential development (~2.0 spaces/1,000 gsf) in urban villages, urban centers and frequent transit served areas.
  - b. **Direct SDCI and SDOT to collaborate to:**
    - i. **Study off-street parking supply and utilization in relation to the built environment** and existing land uses in a selection of Urban Villages/Centers and frequent transit corridors by June 2019.

- ii. **Develop provisions allowing and facilitating the sale or transfer of rights to build parking** (up to the maximum allowance for a project) from one parcel to another within the same urban village, urban center, or FT corridor.
  - iii. **Adopt these local parking limits (replacing the interim limits (8a) and parking transfer rules** by the end of 2019.
9. **On-street Parking Management:** As noted, minimum off-street parking requirements are an indirect and inefficient means of achieving the City’s policy goals to maintain and improve neighborhood access, including the availability of curbside on-street parking. Council can address on-street parking challenges by:
- a. **Extend performance-based parking management beyond existing paid parking areas** by adopting a goal to maintain no fewer than one to two parking spaces open and available on each block face at all times (~85% parking occupancy target) citywide.
  - b. **Provide direction and authority for SDOT to update on-street management policies and practices.** SDOT should conduct broader data collection and analysis in 2018 and early 2019, and return to Council in 2019 with a series of recommendations for better regulation and management to make it easier to find parking in Urban Villages/Centers, and frequent transit areas, as well as within Restricted Parking Zones for permit-holders and short-term visitors.